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CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER™

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Gil Ashby

Dan Lawlis
John Rheaume

Malcolm Smith
Mike McMahon

foreword
D.G. Chichester

Devil's Brigade Part Seventeen: Hell Hath No Fury
Dwayne McDuffie
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Gil Ashby
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This, I Saw
Malcolm Smith
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Devil's Brigade: Finale Reckoning
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CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER.™ Book 16
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FOREWORD

There's something to be said for an 18 part story like "The Devil's Brigade," involving dozens of creators and covering 10 issues.

Epic. Pointless. Interconnected. Disjointed. Unifying. Out-of-control. You can say all those things.

And, being the gentle reader that you are, you no doubt will — to yourself, to your friends, to these offices in correspondence dripping with praise and venom. But the final assessment of Leviathan's Vasa Iniquitatis and their unholy crusade for order-over-chaos notwithstanding, the fact remains we have come to the conclusion of the preternatural Time Of Configuration that kicked it all off to begin with.

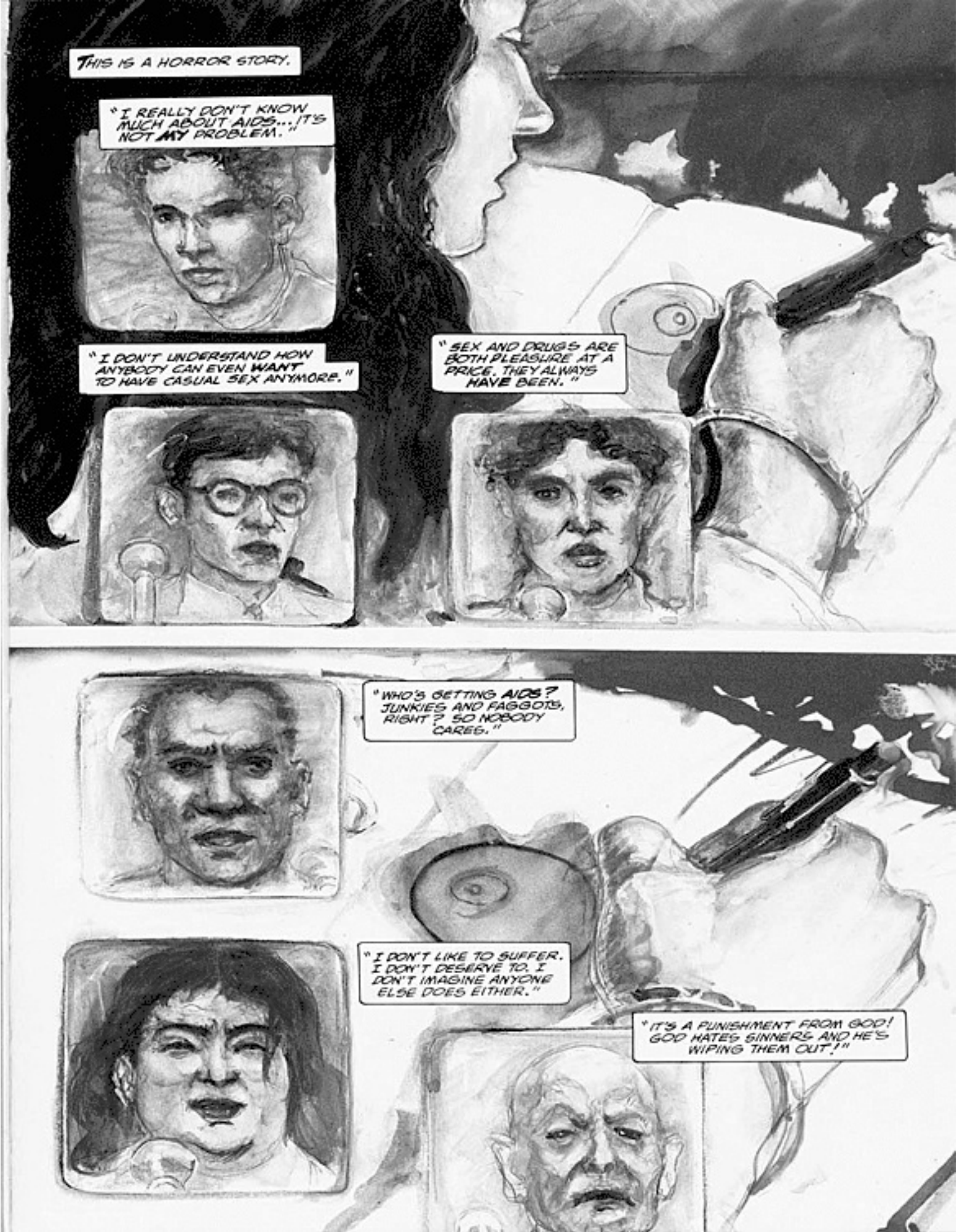
Needless to say, there's hell to pay.

Collecting on behalf of the abyss are myself and co-writer Dwayne McDuffie (who, in addition to his regular duties programming ***Deathlok*** is also penning a ***Demon*** or two uptown at DC). In "Fury," Dr. Casey Gioeli discovers the price of seeking humanitarian cures through the auspice of the inhuman; Gil Ashby provides the visuals. The Cenobites must face a "Reckoning" for their actions on behalf of their dark god in its time of greatest need; Dan Lawlis and John Rheaume are the artists, making a sinful segue from the Rawhead Rex storyline over in ***Nightbreed.*** Finally, actor/writer Malcolm Smith (trading a fallen priest's collar in the *Nightbreed* movie for a word processor's keyboard in this Hellraiser comic) leads the way into the world of Morte Mamme, an ancient enemy of Leviathan about to make a dramatic and deadly return next issue. "This I Saw" is illustrated by the exceptionally talented Mr. Mike McMahon.

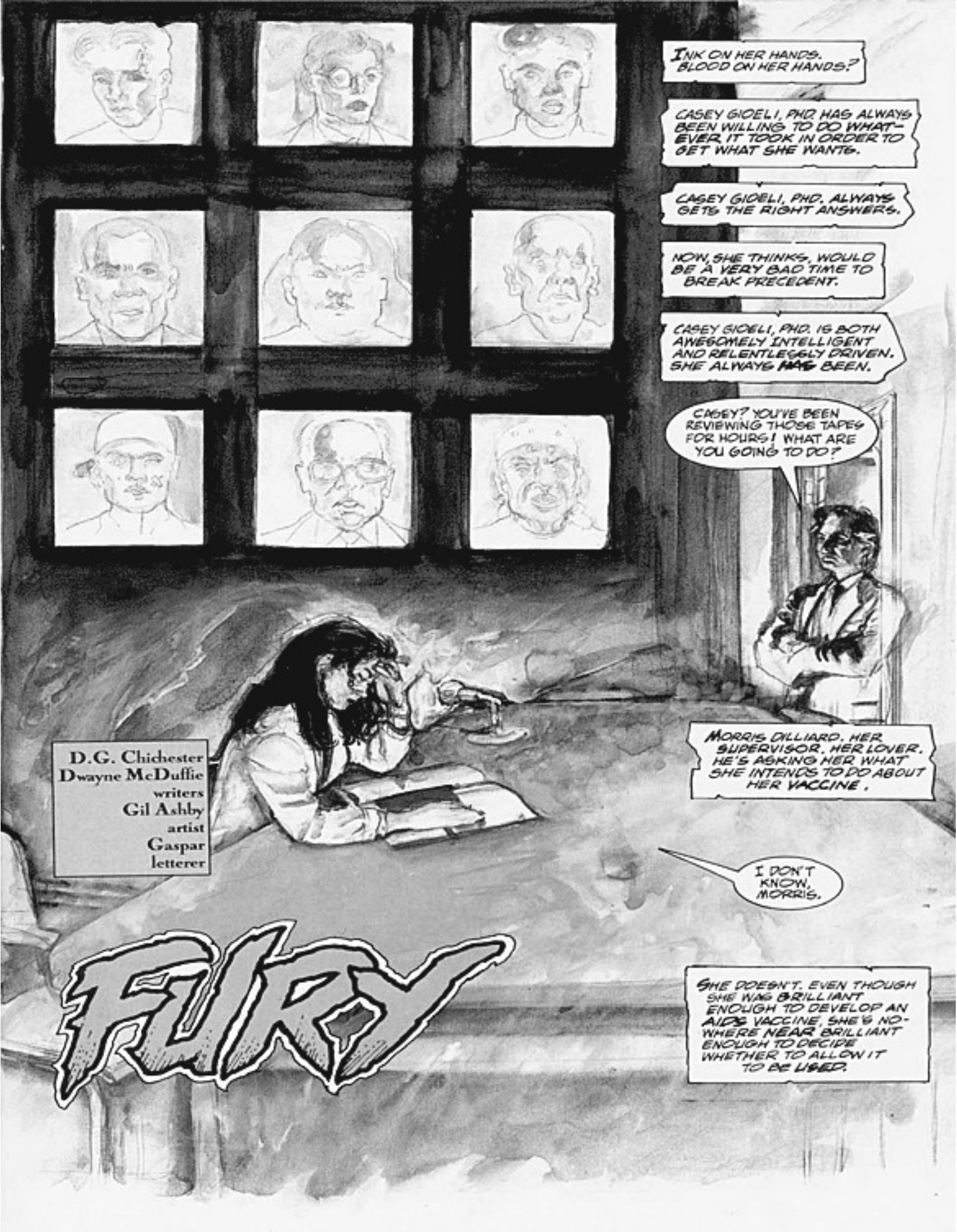
It all starts on the very next page, so why delay?

There's no saving yourself now.

Daniel Chichester
consulting editor


THIS IS A HORROR STORY.
"I REALLY DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT AIDS... IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM."
"I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW ANYBODY CAN EVEN WANT TO HAVE CASUAL SEX ANYMORE."
"SEX AND DRUGS ARE BOTH PLEASURE AT A PRICE. THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN."
"WHO'S GETTING AIDS? JUNKIES AND FAGGOTS, RIGHT? SO NOBODY CARES."
"I DON'T LIKE TO SUFFER. I DON'T DESERVE TO. I DON'T IMAGINE ANYONE ELSE DOES EITHER."
"IT'S A PUNISHMENT FROM GOD! GOD HATES SINNERS AND HE'S WIPING THEM OUT!"

"THEY WOULDN'T BE SICK AT ALL--SICK AS IN ILL--IF THEY KEPT THEIR PARTS WHERE THEY BELONG."
"MY GRANDBABY IS DEAD. 22 YEARS OLD AND A JUNKIE... HE SHARED A NEEDLE AND GOT AIDS. I WONDER WHO ELSE HE SHARED WITH."
"PEOPLE WITH AIDS OR WHATEVER. SEND THEM TO A DOC AND MAKE 'EM BETTER!"
"IT DON'T SEEM SO TOUGH TO FIGURE OUT TO ME..."
DAMN!


INK ON HER HANDS. BLOOD ON HER HANDS?
CASEY GIOELI, PHD. HAS ALWAYS BEEN WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IT TOOK IN ORDER TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS.
CASEY GIOELI, PHD. ALWAYS GETS THE RIGHT ANSWERS.
NOW, SHE THINKS, WOULD BE A VERY BAD TIME TO BREAK PRECEDENT.
CASEY GIOELI, PHD. IS BOTH AWESOMELY INTELLIGENT AND RELENTLESSLY DRIVEN. SHE ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
CASEY? YOU'VE BEEN REVIEWING THOSE TAPES FOR HOURS! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
MORRIS DILLIARD. HER SUPERVISOR. HER LOVER. HE'S ASKING HER WHAT SHE INTENDS TO DO ABOUT HER VACCINE.
I DON'T KNOW, MORRIS.
SHE DOESN'T. EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS BRILLIANT ENOUGH TO DEVELOP AN AIDS VACCINE, SHE'S NOWHERE NEAR BRILLIANT ENOUGH TO DECIDE WHETHER TO ALLOW IT TO BE USED.
D.G. Chichester
Dwayne McDuffie
writers
Gil Ashby
artist
Gaspar
letterer
FURY

YOU'RE AFRAID OF THE BAN?
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HAS BANNED HER RESEARCH, PENDING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE... UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES BEHIND ITS INITIAL PRESENTATION.
NO. MY CAREER IS FINISHED, WHATEVER THEY DO.
I'M AFRAID THAT I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE A DECISION OF THIS MAGNITUDE FOR OTHER PEOPLE.
WHO BETTER TO DECIDE THAN YOU? CASEY, YOUR VACCINE MAY BE A CURE FOR AIDS!
AND IF IT IS, SHE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO DIE WHILE SHE MAKES HER DECISION.
IF IT ISN'T... WELL, SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN.
INK, AT LEAST, WASHES OFF...
YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT THE VACCINE IS UNTESTED, UNDER RESEARCHED...
...AND DOWNRIGHT RADICAL, I'VE HEARD. AND YET, IF YOU CARED ABOUT THE DYING MASSES...
HOW DARE YOU! HOW DARE YOU?!

DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT CARING! AND STOP TELLING ME WHAT TO DO. YOU DON'T KNOW ME THAT WELL!
YOU WANTED ME FOR SEX, AND I WANTED YOU FOR YOUR COMPUTER. WE BOTH GOT WHAT WE WANTED. LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT.
CASEY GIOELI, PHD TAKES HER LEAVE.
AS LOVELY IN HER FURY AS SHE WAS IN THE THROES OF PASSION.
HIS LABYRINTHINE MACHINATIONS HAVE MANEUVERED HER TO A POSITION WHERE SHE WILL BE WILLING TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
A SATISFIED SMILE SPLITS THE SEAMS OF "DILLIARDS" VENEER.
METAL PINS PUNCTURE BORROWED FLESH
A HAND MOVES QUICKLY TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE.
AFTER ALL, ONE HAS TO KEEP UP APPEARANCES.

DAMN MORRIS DILLIARD TO HELL! HE WANTED HER TO DO IT.
...AND HERE SHE IS, STANDING ON DR. BERNARD FISHER'S PORCH, PREPARING TO DO EXACTLY WHAT DILLIARD WANTED.
IS THE BUZZER BROKEN?
IT'S BEEN FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS SINCE DR. FISHER TAUGHT HER THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMITMENT AND PASSION.
IF SHE'S GOING TO BE A CRUSADER, SHE NEEDS HIS HELP.
AND SHE KNEW THAT HER FRIEND HAS AIDS.
HE'S LOST SEVENTY POUNDS.
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO EVER SEE YOU AGAIN.
HIS VOICE RATTLES LIKE THE MORNING PAPER.
PURPLE BLOTCHES ON PALE WHITE SKIN. KAPOSI'S SARCOMA.
THERE IS A SMELL IN THE ROOM. ONE THAT SHE ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH HOSPITALS. NOW SHE KNOWS BETTER.
IT IS THE SCENT OF DEATH.
DOOR'S OPEN.
BERNIE? YOU HOME?
WHO'S HERE?
IT'S ME! CASEY. I--
SHE DIDN'T MEAN TO REACT. SHE THOUGHT SHE HAD PREPARED HERSELF. AFTER ALL, SHE'S A DOCTOR.

SHE DIDN'T MEAN TO GASP, AIR ESCAPING FROM HER LUNGS WITH A START AS SHE STUMBLES BACKWARDS LIKE THE SHRINKING HEROINE OF A HORROR FILM.
BUT THE SIGHT BEFORE HER IS MORE TERRIFYING THAN ANY FILM.
MY FRIENDS DON'T CALL ANYMORE.
THE CO-OP BOARD WANTS TO THROW ME OUT OF MY APARTMENT. THE INSURANCE COMPANY IS LOOKING FOR LOOPHOLES IN MY POLICY.
HE DOESN'T HAVE TO DIE...
NOT NECESSARILY!
THE LAST TIME WE MET, YOU HELPED ME A GREAT DEAL. I WANT TO RETURN THE FAVOR.
IT'S EXPERIMENTAL. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT THE RISKS ARE.
BUT THIS VACCINE CAN--MIGHT--BE ABLE TO CURE YOU. AND SO MANY OTHERS.
RISK? WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOSE?

THE NAMELESS ONE HAS DISCARDED HIS SHEATH OF FLESH. THE DECEPTION IS NO LONGER PERTINENT. A FALSE IMAGE DISCARDED AS THE TRUTH FLICKERS IN GLOWING PHOSPHOR.
THE TIME OF CONFIGURATION IS AT HAND. A TIME OF TESTING. UNKNOWING SOULS ARE PLACED AT THE CROSSROADS OF CHAOS AND ORDER.
SHOULD THE MAJORITY WALK THE PATH OF STRUCTURE, THEN BLESSED ORDER SHALL PREVAIL. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE MAJORITY OF THE CHOSEN CHOOSE DISORDER, THEN HELL ITSELF SHALL CRUMBLE INTO CHAOS.
THE BATTLE IS JOINED. THE NAMELESS ONE KNOWS THE SCORE.
A WHITE SUPREMACIST NAMED DECOURCY CHOOSES REPRESSION AND ORDER.
LEO GHABEL, A GENTLE COMMUNITY LEADER BECOMES A SERIAL KILLER, TAKING A SAVAGE TURN TOWARDS CHAOS.
POLICE OFFICERS ELLIOT AND GEORGE INCITE A RACE RIOT. ANOTHER VICTORY FOR CHAOS.
A PRIEST NAMED ABADDON LEADS A NEW INQUISITION. ORDER VICTORIOUS.

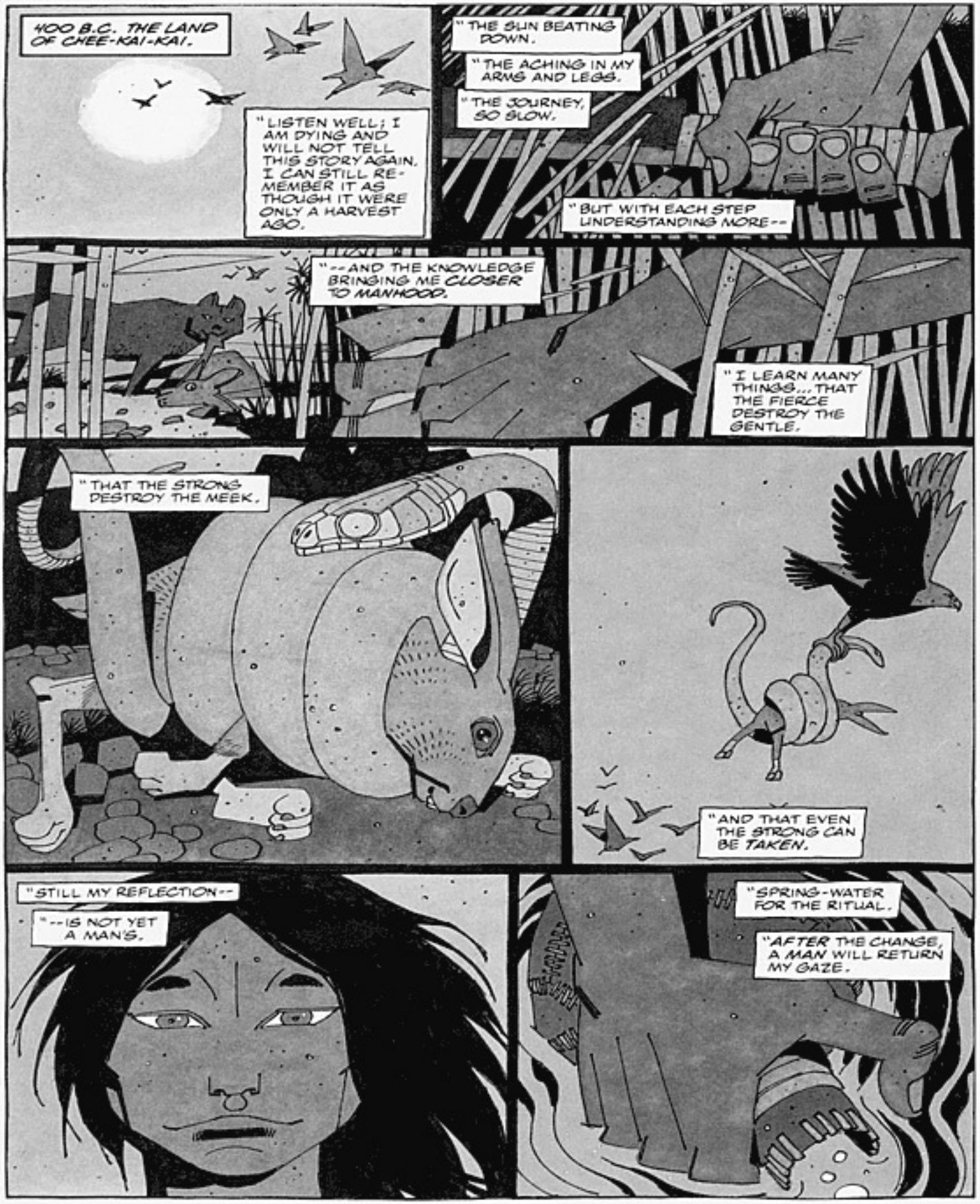
A TIE. THE FATE OF HELL RESTS IN THE HANDS OF HER FAVORITE SON. EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GIOELLI'S CHOICE.
THE NAMELESS ONE IS UNCONCERNED. EVERYTHING IS GOING PRECISELY ACCORDING TO PLAN.
AND GIOELLI, A PUPPET BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF HER PUPPETEER, CARRIES OUT HIS DESIGN.
EVENING DR. GIOELLI. YOU'RE LOOKING REAL GOOD, DR. FISHER.
A PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURER'S WAREHOUSE.
THIS WAY...
YEAH, WAIT UP!--
--YOUR MIRACLE CURE'S GOT ME BACK ON MY FEET BUT I'M NOT READY TO RUN A DAMNED MARATHON YET.
NOT YET, BUT SOON.
AND ONCE WE REPLACE THIS NEW FDA APPROVED AZT ALTERNATIVE WITH MY CURE, YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF RUNNING MATES.

THIS CRATE CONTAINS THE MASTER. THE DRUG COMPANY WILL MANUFACTURE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOSES OF MY VACCINE AND DISTRIBUTE THEM ALL OVER THE WORLD.
AND BY THE TIME THEY FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED...
...IT'LL BE TOO LATE.
I HOPE I'M DOING THE RIGHT THING.
LOOK AT ME! MY IMMUNE SYSTEM'S BACK UP. I'M GAINING WEIGHT. MY BODY'S HEALING ITSELF. DON'T GET COLD FEET NOW!
ANYWAY, IT'S TOO LATE.
BERNIE, WAKE UP! I'VE GOT GREAT NEWS.
KDOOM

MY VACCINE WAS SHIPPED OUT THIS MORNING. IT WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH.
BERNIE..?
PAPERS SCATTERED ABOUT AN EMPTY ROOM.
AN EVICTION NOTICE FROM HIS CO-OP BOARD.
AND THE PAPER IS STAINED... WITH WHAT?
BERNIE.
NOT BERNIE.
NOT ANYMORE.

OH, PLEASE.
PLEASE, NO.
HE'S DEAD, AND IT ISN'T AIDS.
IT'S THE SIDE EFFECT OF AN EXPERIMENTAL DRUG.
A DRUG CREATED BY ONE CASEY BIOELI, PHD.
A DRUG THAT, DUE TO HER EFFORTS, IS EVEN NOW BEING DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

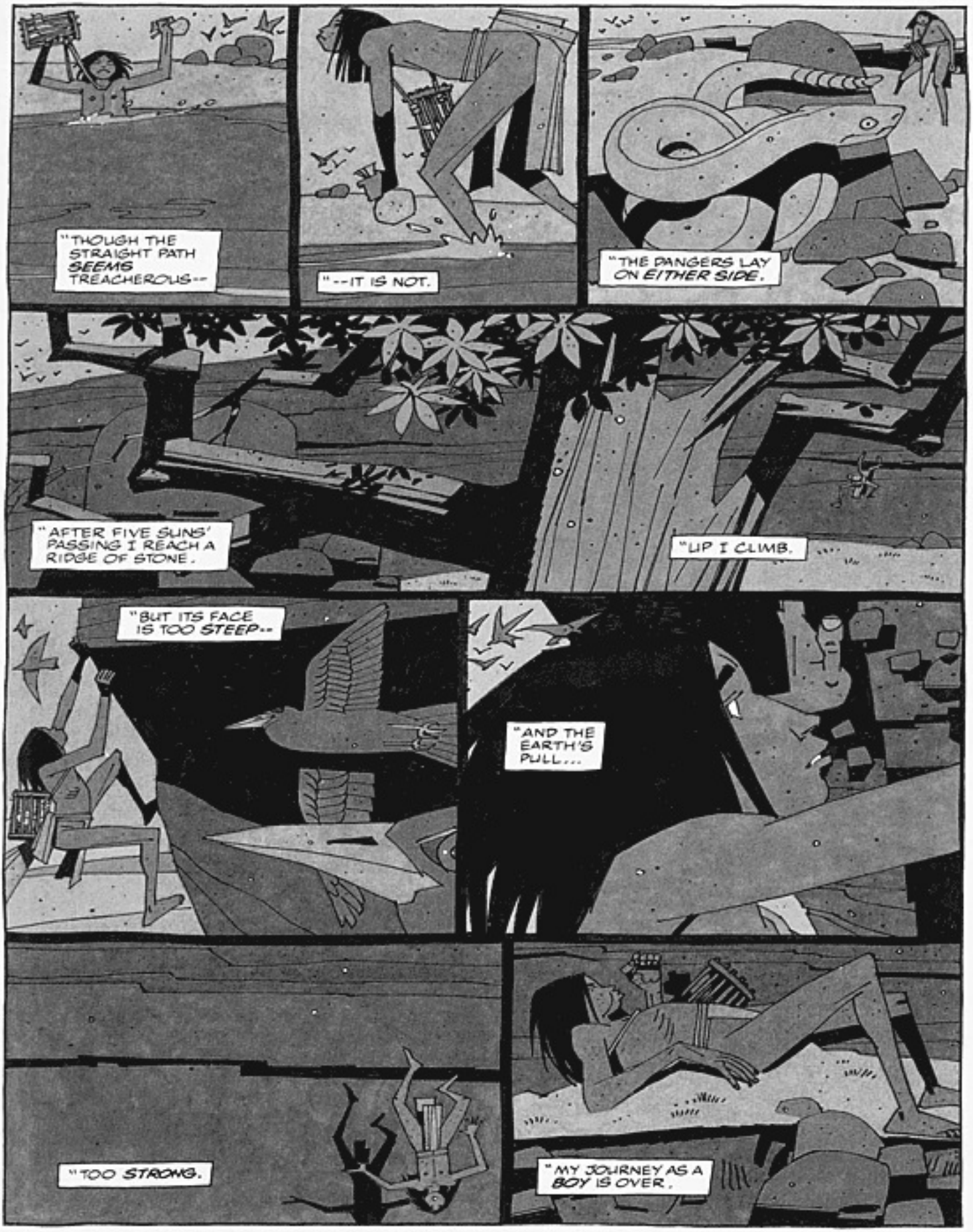
THIS IS A HORROR STORY.
NOT A CAUTIONARY TALE. NO SIMPLE INDICTMENT OF SCIENCE DARING TO INVESTIGATE "WHAT MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW." THIS ISN'T ABOUT DEMONS OR THEIR INFERNAL MACGUFFING.
THIS IS ABOUT REAL HORROR. KNOWLEDGE TANGLED IN BUREAUCRACY AND STYMIED BY WILLFUL IGNORANCE.
LEADERS WHO WILL NOT LEAD UNTIL THEY SEE WHICH WAY THE MOB IS ALREADY HEADED, THEN HAPPILY PANDER TO THE MOB'S WORST INSTINCTS.
BUDGETS SLASHED WHILE HOMOPHOBIA, RACISM AND DEATH TOLLS ALL RISE.
A NUMBING SENSE OF SOMETHING PRECIOUS, IRREPLACEABLY LOST.
CHAOS VICTORIOUS.
THIS IS A HORROR STORY.
AND LONG AFTER YOU CLOSE THESE PAGES, THE HORROR CONTINUES...
THE END

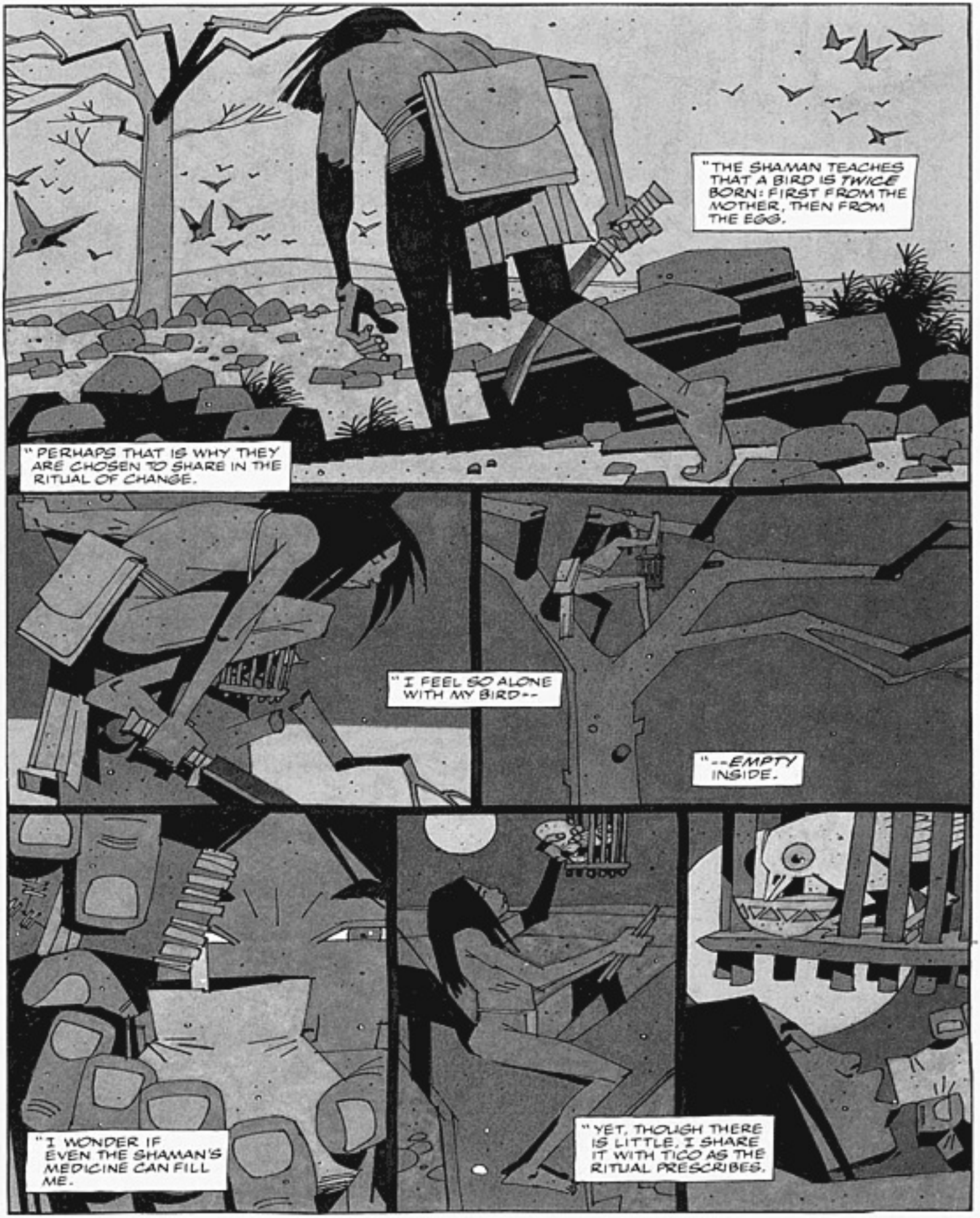

400 B.C. THE LAND OF CHEE-KAI-KAI.
"LISTEN WELL; I AM DYING AND WILL NOT TELL THIS STORY AGAIN. I CAN STILL REMEMBER IT AS THOUGH IT WERE ONLY A HARVEST AGO.
"THE SUN BEATING DOWN.
"THE ACHING IN MY ARMS AND LEGS.
"THE JOURNEY, SO SLOW.
"BUT WITH EACH STEP UNDERSTANDING MORE--
"--AND THE KNOWLEDGE BRINGING ME CLOSER TO MANHOOD.
"I LEARN MANY THINGS... THAT THE FIERCE DESTROY THE GENTLE.
"THAT THE STRONG DESTROY THE MEEK.
"AND THAT EVEN THE STRONG CAN BE TAKEN.
"STILL MY REFLECTION--
"--IS NOT YET A MAN'S.
"SPRING-WATER FOR THE RITUAL.
"AFTER THE CHANGE, A MAN WILL RETURN MY GAZE.

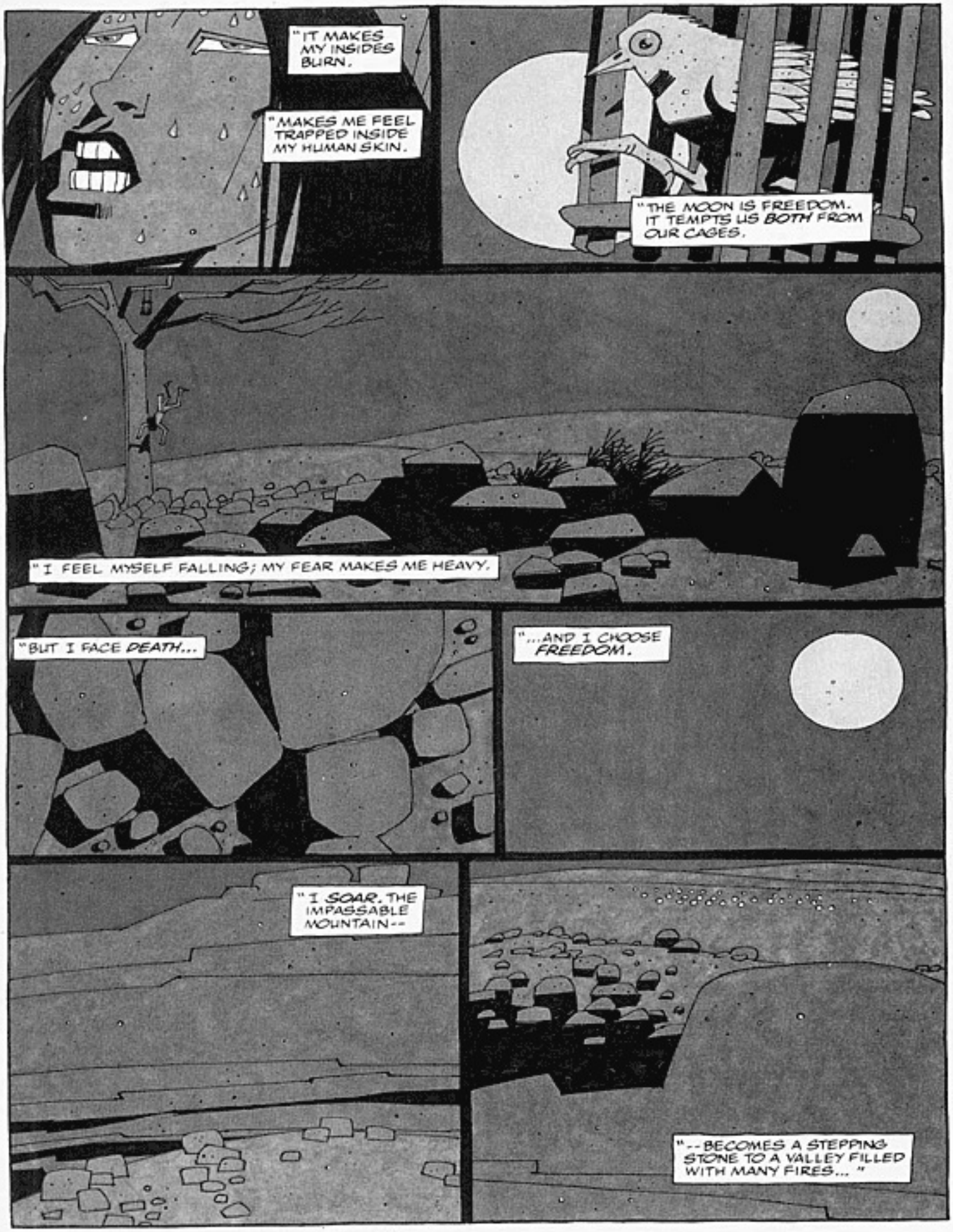
"I AM CALLED LITTLE MOON.
"FOUR SUNS HAVE PASSED ON MY JOURNEY OF CHANGE.
"WITH ONLY TICO AT MY SIDE I PRESS ON...
"OVER THE GRASSY HILLS.
"THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH NO TRIBESMAN HAS EVER RETURNED.
"BUT IT WAS MY CHOICE -- MY INNER SPIRIT'S CHOICE -- AND WOULD NOT BE QUESTIONED.
THIS, I SAW
Malcolm Smith writer
Mike McMahon artist
Michael Heisler letterer

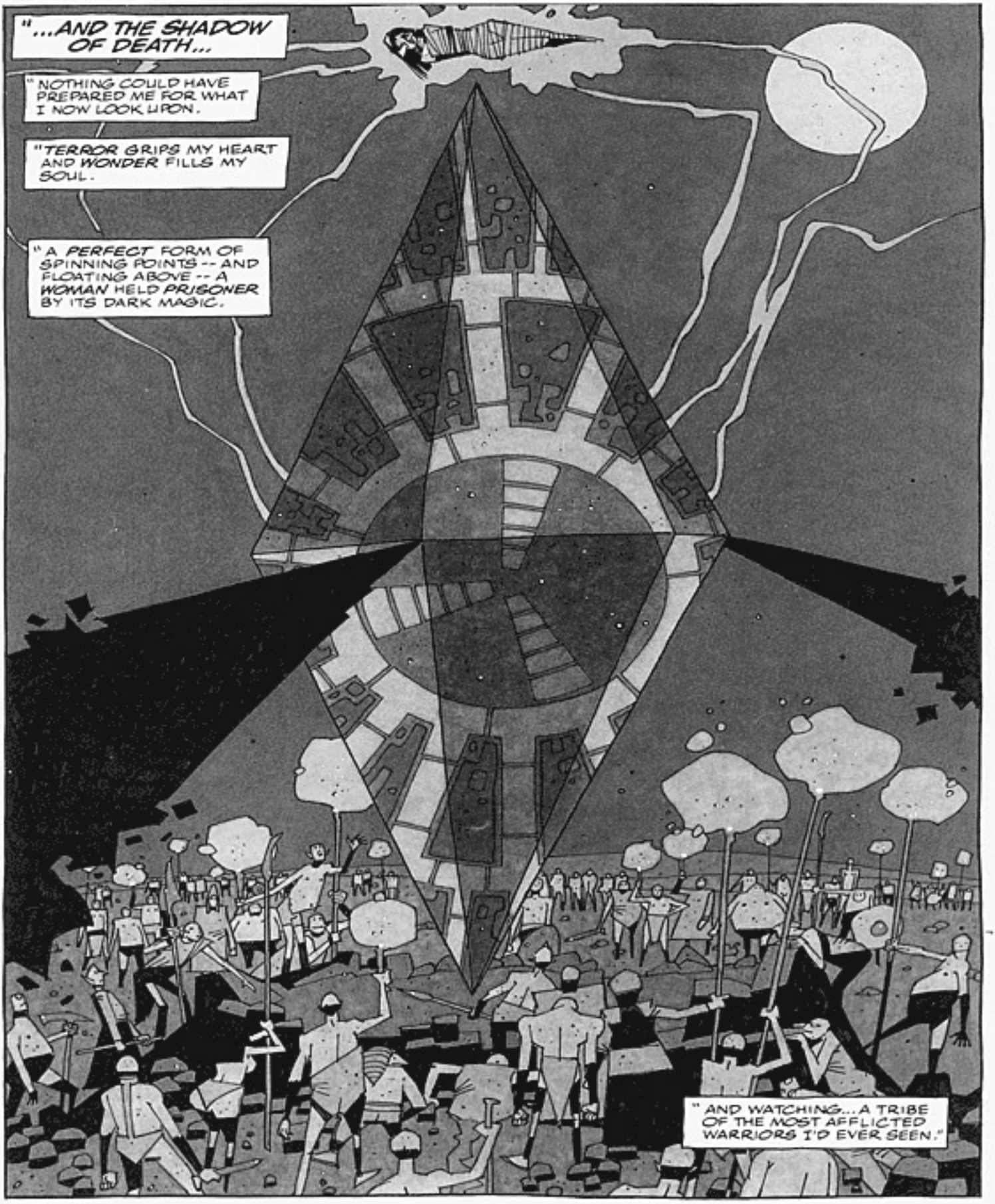
"MY CHOOSING RITUAL HAD BEEN WITNESSED BY THE ENTIRE TRIBE.
"THE SHAMAN'S SPIN WAS LONG AND HARD...
"... HIS GAZE REMOTE AS I STUMBLED, BUT DID NOT FALL.
"I THREW THE SPEAR--
"--AND BEFORE IT LANDED--
"--THE SILENCE TOLD ME THE WAY I WAS TO GO.

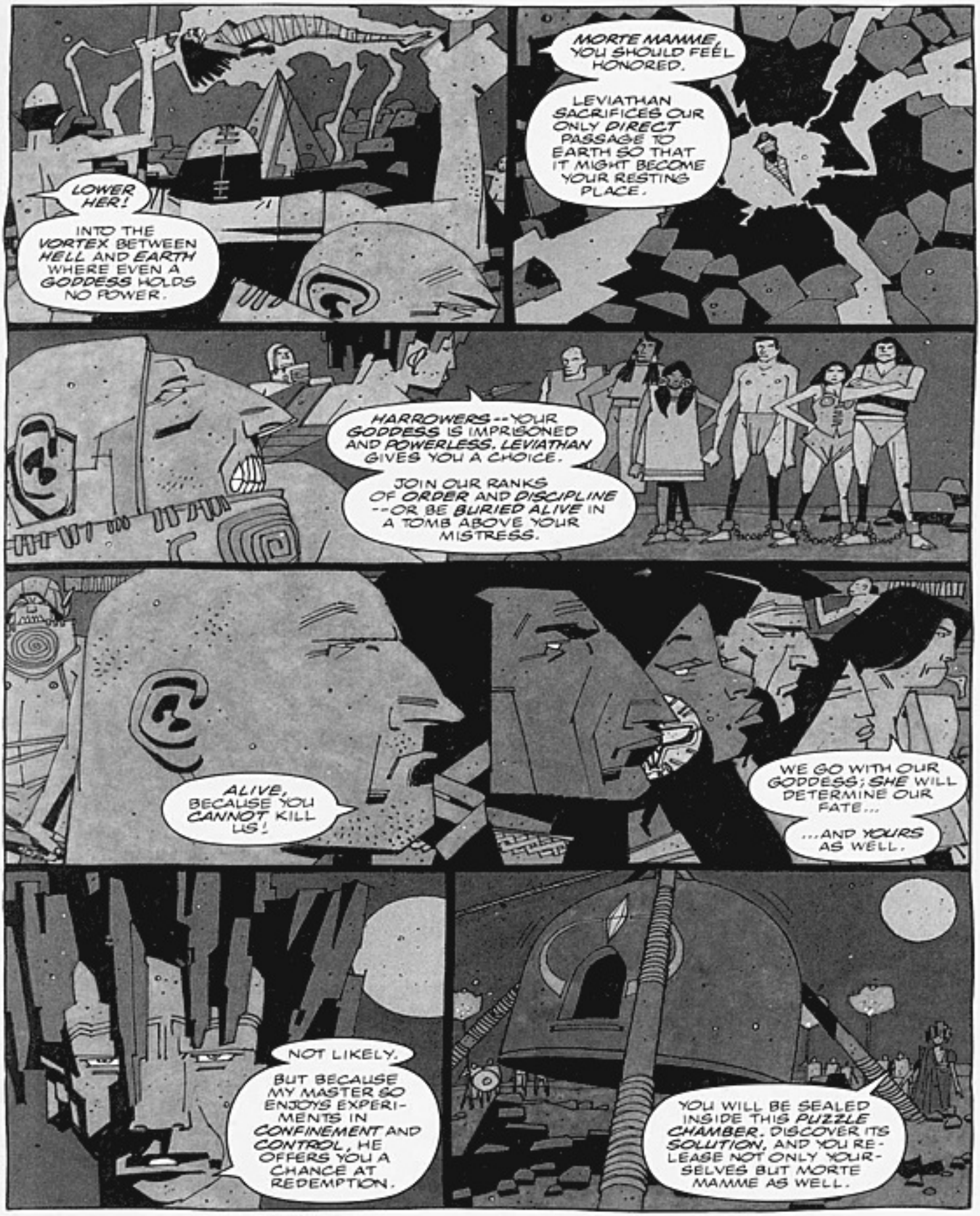
"PITIFUL BOY-- HE TAKES ONLY A SPARROW--"
--THE RUNT OF BIRDS FOR THE RUNT OF THE TRIBE--
NEITHER OF THEM WILL SURVIVE.
"ONLY THE SHAMAN HAD FAITH IN ME."
HERE IS THE MEDICINE OF CHANGE.
TRAVEL THE STRAIGHT LINE AND TRUST THE RITUAL.
THE SUN-COMPASS WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY. TO STRAY MORE THAN THE LENGTH OF TWO SPEARS WILL BRING FAILURE.
SURPRISE US ALL, LITTLE MOON.
HOW?
RETURN.
"I STAY RIGID TO MY PATH.
"BUT THE TEMPTATIONS TO STRAY ARE MANY."


"THOUGH THE STRAIGHT PATH SEEMS TREACHEROUS--
"--IT IS NOT.
"THE DANGERS LAY ON EITHER SIDE.
"AFTER FIVE SUNS' PASSING I REACH A RIDGE OF STONE.
"UP I CLIMB.
"BUT ITS FACE IS TOO STEEP..
"AND THE EARTH'S PULL...
"TOO STRONG.
"MY JOURNEY AS A BOY IS OVER.

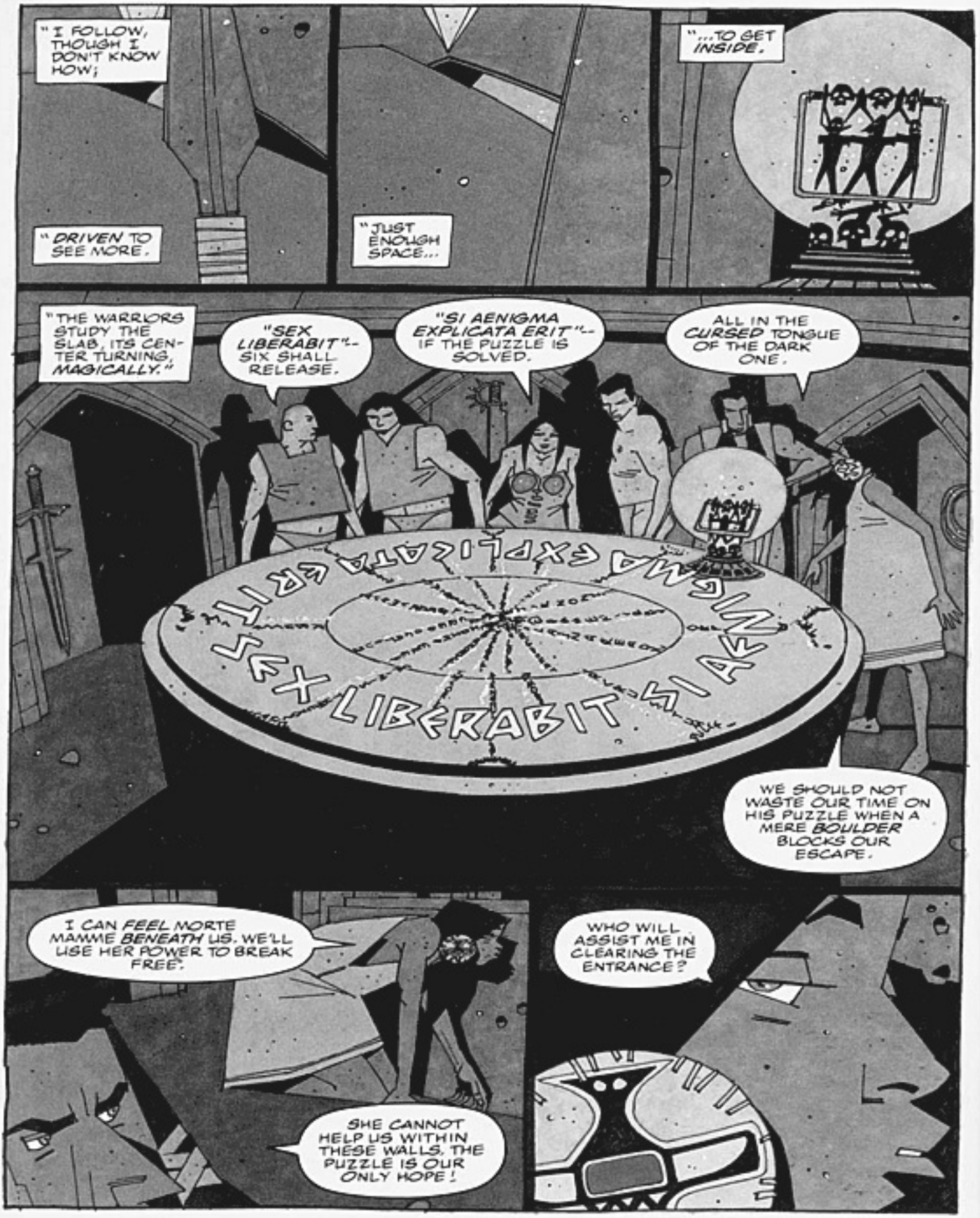

"THE SHAMAN TEACHES THAT A BIRD IS TWICE BORN: FIRST FROM THE MOTHER, THEN FROM THE EGG.
"PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THEY ARE CHOSEN TO SHARE IN THE RITUAL OF CHANGE.
"I FEEL SO ALONE WITH MY BIRD--
"--EMPTY INSIDE.
"I WONDER IF EVEN THE SHAMAN'S MEDICINE CAN FILL ME.
"YET, THOUGH THERE IS LITTLE, I SHARE IT WITH TICO AS THE RITUAL PRESCRIBES.


"IT MAKES MY INSIDES BURN.
"MAKES ME FEEL TRAPPED INSIDE MY HUMAN SKIN.
"THE MOON IS FREEDOM. IT TEMPTS US BOTH FROM OUR CAGES.
"I FEEL MYSELF FALLING; MY FEAR MAKES ME HEAVY.
"BUT I FACE DEATH...
"...AND I CHOOSE FREEDOM.
"I SOAR. THE IMPASSABLE MOUNTAIN--
"--BECOMES A STEPPING STONE TO A VALLEY FILLED WITH MANY FIRES... "


"...AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH...
"NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I NOW LOOK UPON.
"TERROR GRIPS MY HEART AND WONDER FILLS MY SOUL.
"A PERFECT FORM OF SPINNING POINTS -- AND FLOATING ABOVE -- A WOMAN HELD PRISONER BY ITS DARK MAGIC.
"AND WATCHING... A TRIBE OF THE MOST AFFLICTED WARRIORS I'D EVER SEEN."


LOWER HER!
INTO THE VORTEX BETWEEN HELL AND EARTH WHERE EVEN A GODDESS HOLDS NO POWER.
MORTE MAMME, YOU SHOULD FEEL HONORED.
LEVIATHAN SACRIFICES OUR ONLY DIRECT PASSAGE TO EARTH SO THAT IT MIGHT BECOME YOUR RESTING PLACE.
HARROWERS--YOUR GODDESS IS IMPRISONED AND POWERLESS. LEVIATHAN GIVES YOU A CHOICE.
JOIN OUR RANKS OF ORDER AND DISCIPLINE --OR BE BURIED ALIVE IN A TOMB ABOVE YOUR MISTRESS.
ALIVE, BECAUSE YOU CANNOT KILL US!
WE GO WITH OUR GODDESS; SHE WILL DETERMINE OUR FATE...
...AND YOURS AS WELL.
NOT LIKELY.
BUT BECAUSE MY MASTER SO ENJOYS EXPERIMENTS IN CONFINEMENT AND CONTROL, HE OFFERS YOU A CHANCE AT REDEMPTION.
YOU WILL BE SEALED INSIDE THIS PUZZLE CHAMBER. DISCOVER ITS SOLUTION, AND YOU RELEASE NOT ONLY YOURSELVES BUT MORTE MAMME AS WELL.

YOU WILL NEED LIGHT FOR YOUR STUDIES.
YOU MAY TAKE THIS LAMP. I WARN YOU, HOWEVER, ITS FUEL IS LIMITED.
AND TO REKINDLE THE FLAME...
...YOU MUST FEED IT FLESH.
YOU DARE SUBMIT US TO THE TORTURES OF YOUR WORLD?!
NOT AT ALL. I MERELY GIVE YOU THE OPTION OF SUBMITTING YOURSELVES...
...SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.
"THE SIX CAPTURED ONES ARE LED INTO A CAVE;
"DOWN--
"--DEEP INTO THE GROUND--
"--THEN ARE SEALED IN THE STONE ROOM THAT HAS BEEN LOWERED FROM ABOVE.


"I FOLLOW, THOUGH I DON'T KNOW HOW;
"DRIVEN TO SEE MORE.
"JUST ENOUGH SPACE...
"...TO GET INSIDE.
"THE WARRIORS STUDY THE SLAB, ITS CENTER TURNING, MAGICALLY."
"SEX LIBERABIT"-- SIX SHALL RELEASE.
"SI AENIGMA EXPLICATA ERIT"-- IF THE PUZZLE IS SOLVED.
ALL IN THE CURSED TONGUE OF THE DARK ONE.
SEX LIBERABIT SIX
SI AENIGMA EXPLICATA ERIT
WE SHOULD NOT WASTE OUR TIME ON HIS PUZZLE WHEN A MERE BOULDER BLOCKS OUR ESCAPE.
I CAN FEEL MORTE MAMMIE BENEATH US. WE'LL USE HER POWER TO BREAK FREE.
SHE CANNOT HELP US WITHIN THESE WALLS, THE PUZZLE IS OUR ONLY HOPE!
WHO WILL ASSIST ME IN CLEARING THE ENTRANCE?

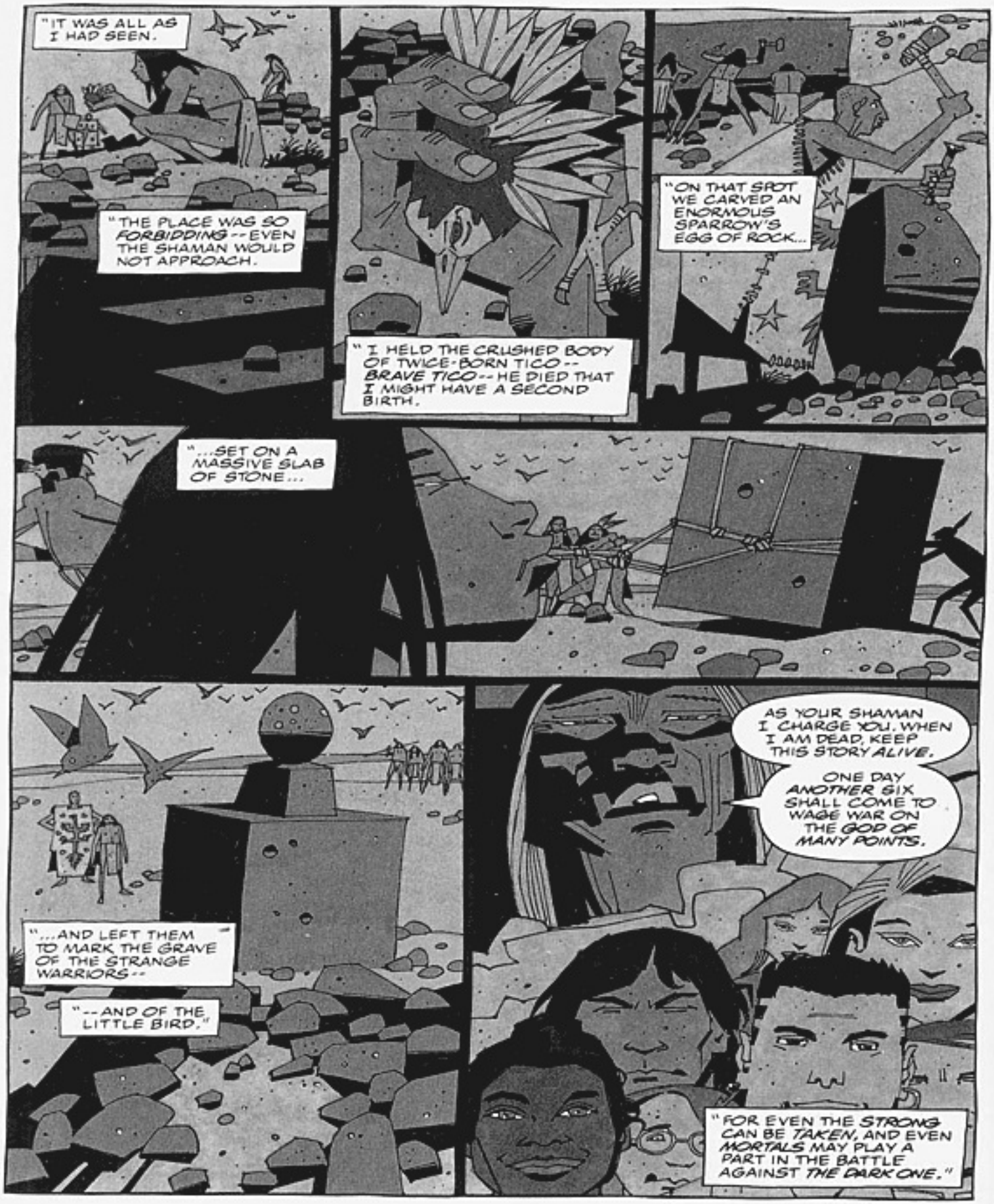
YOU'RE WASTING PRECIOUS TIME!
WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO FIND A SOLUTION.
"TIME PASSES.
I HAVE NO STRENGTH.
"THE GREAT ROCK CANNOT BE MOVED.
"THE HORRID LAMP GROWS DIM.
WITHOUT LIGHT WE ARE LOST.
I WAS WRONG! NOW WE'VE SQUANDERED THE LIGHT!
I...I OFFER MY FLESH...TO REPAY THE DEBT.
NO! THE FLAME MUST BE REKINDLED, BUT WE WILL ALL RISK THE SACRIFICE.
"THE LARGEST MAN CUTS HIS BELT INTO SIX STRIPS.
"THEN DRAWS THE SHORTEST.
IT'S A SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO SAVE OUR GODDESS.
FOR FREEDOM!
CHK
"A GARISH AMBER LIGHT FILLS THE ROOM ONCE MORE."

USE THE FLAME TO SEAL YOUR WOUND.
NNAAAAHIEEEG!
I FEAR THAT WE WILL ALL SOON KNOW HIS PAIN...
"...TOO SOON..."
I KNOW THE ANSWER!
IF WE TRANSLATE THE LATIN TO SANSKRIT THEN THE RHYME SCHEME WILL SHOW US THE WAY.
"MANY TORTUOUS HOURS PASS...
"...AS ONE BY ONE ALL GIVE OF THEIR FLESH;
"CONFIDENT THAT THEIR SALVATION IS NEAR."
WE HAVE IT! I'VE MARKED THE EXACT ALIGNMENT FOR THE SOLUTION. PREPARE TO SPEAK THE LATIN VERSE ALOUD.

CREDO FATUM NOS COEGISSE.
VOLO COMPARARE NONNULLA TEGUMEMBRA.
"SOMETHING IS HAPPENING! THE CHAMBER IS GLOWING WITH A NEW LIGHT...
"...HANDPRINTS BURNING ON THE WALLS."
O GODDESS! WE'VE BEEN TRICKED! THE PUZZLE IS IN TWO PARTS!
"HOW I WEEP FOR THEM! THEIR BLOODY STUMPS WILL NOT UNLOCK WHAT INSISTS ON HANDS AND FEET AS KEYS...
"AND SO IT ENDS.
"THE FLESH-FED LAMP GROWS DIM; ONE BY ONE THE RAGGED BREATHS FALTER AND CEASE.
"ONLY I WELCOME THE DARKNESS...
"...FOR IT SHOWS ME A SLIVER OF LIGHT.
"THE LIGHT BECOMES A BEACON..."

"TO FREEDOM.
"PAIN DRIVES ME FROM MY SOARING BODY.
"MY SPIRIT HANGS IN NOTHINGNESS AS I WATCH TICO DIE.
"NOW I UNDERSTAND."

"I AWAKE AS IF FROM A DREAM-- THE MEDICINE OF CHANGE SWEATED FROM MY BODY.
"I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO. I AM TO RETURN TO MY TRIBE AND TELL THEM: *THIS, I SAW.*"
THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO, AND ALL WHO LISTENED TO MY TALE *KNEW* IN THEIR HEARTS *(AS YOU KNOW NOW)* THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN IMAGINED, BUT WAS *REAL*.
YET MY TRIBE NEEDED *PROOF* OF ITS TRUTH.
SO I LED THE SHAMAN AND A GROUP OF WARRIORS BACK TO THE RIDGE OF STONE.
"*THIS* TIME IT WAS SURMOUNTED WITHOUT WINGS."


"IT WAS ALL AS I HAD SEEN.
"THE PLACE WAS SO FORBIDDING -- EVEN THE SHAMAN WOULD NOT APPROACH.
" I HELD THE CRUSHED BODY OF TWICE-BORN TICO -- BRAVE TICO -- HE DIED THAT I MIGHT HAVE A SECOND BIRTH.
"ON THAT SPOT WE CARVED AN ENORMOUS SPARROW'S EGG OF ROCK...
"...SET ON A MASSIVE SLAB OF STONE...
"...AND LEFT THEM TO MARK THE GRAVE OF THE STRANGE WARRIORS --
"-- AND OF THE LITTLE BIRD."
AS YOUR SHAMAN I CHARGE YOU. WHEN I AM DEAD, KEEP THIS STORY ALIVE.
ONE DAY ANOTHER SIX SHALL COME TO WAGE WAR ON THE GOD OF MANY POINTS.
"FOR EVEN THE STRONG CAN BE TAKEN, AND EVEN MORTALS MAY PLAY A PART IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DARK ONE."

TO BE CONTINUED . . .

GRIOT'S FATE WAS WRITTEN SINCE BEFORE HE WAS UNDEAD.
PREORDAINED TO HANG WITH THE TATTOOED REMAINS OF HIS ANCESTORS--
-- EVERY IMAGE ON EVERY SKIN A DIFFERENT STORY OF THE INFERNAL IN THE ANNALS OF A PLACE CALLED HELL.
CEASE THIS WEARISOM CONTEMPLATION OF YOUR FAT, CENOBITE--

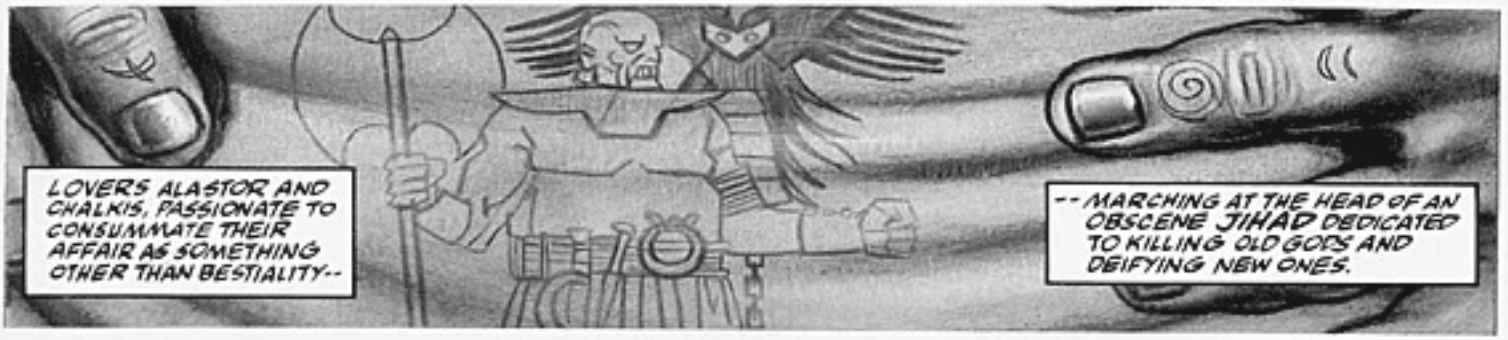
RECKONING

D.G. Chichester
writer
Dan Lawlis
with
John Rheaume
artists
Rick Parker
letterer

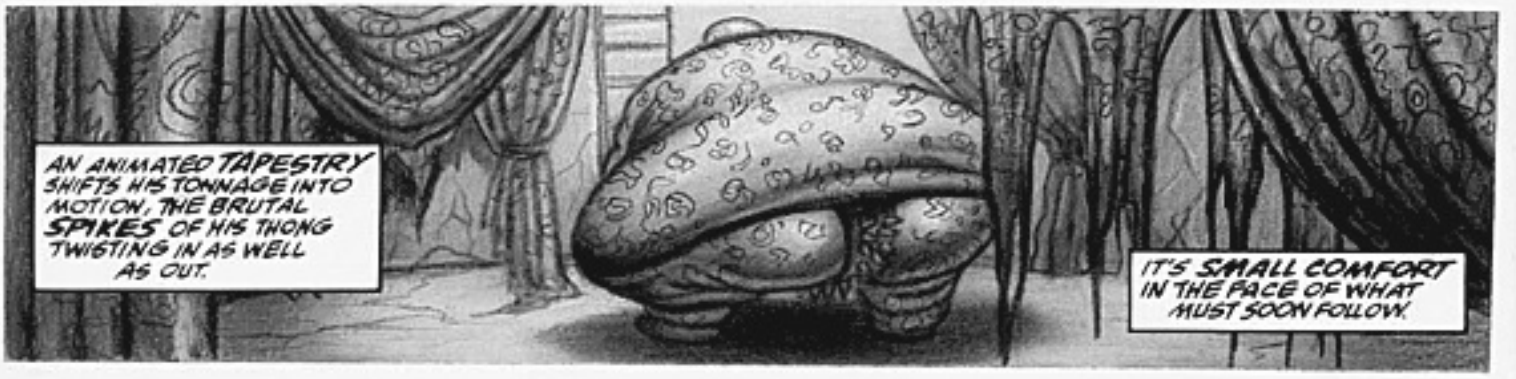
YOU MUST TRANSCRIBE THE VERDICTS OF THE TRIBUNAL ON YOUR FLESH, GRIOT-- YOUR RIND WILL CARRY THE WEIGHT OF HELL'S STANDING INTO THE FUTURE!

IMAGES OF AN INNOCENT NAMED KIRSTIE, RIPE FOR THE INCESTUOUS TOUCH OF FLAYED AND DIABOLIC UNCLE FRANK.

A SURGEON CALLED CHANARD, CUTTING DEEP INTO THE LABYRINTH OF THE HUMAN BRAIN--
-- THERE TO FIND HIS OWN MADNESS AND A DESTINY AS ONE OF THE ABYSS' STORMTROOPERS.

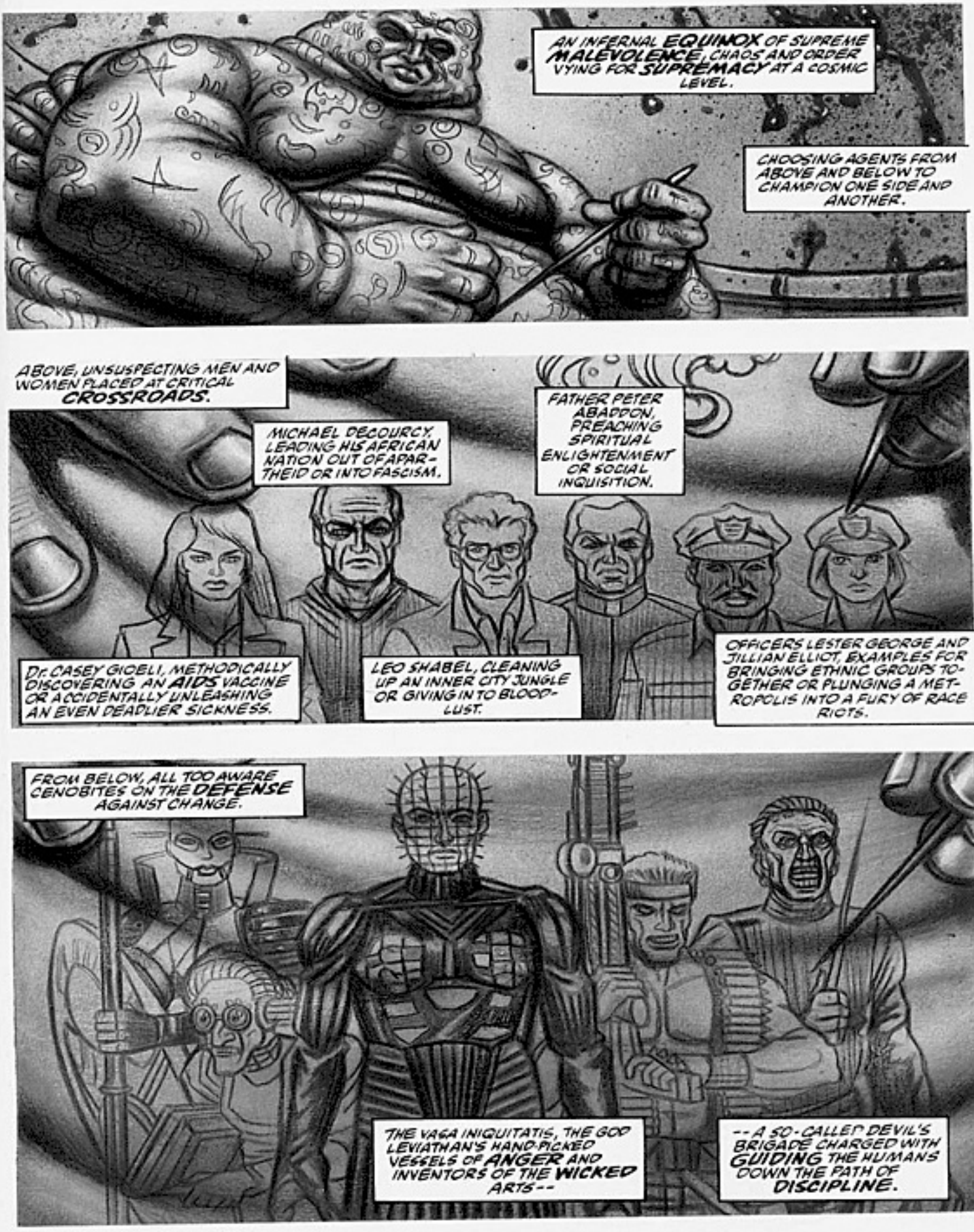

LOVERS ALASTOR AND CHALKIS, PASSIONATE TO CONSUMMATE THEIR AFFAIR AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN BESTIALITY--
-- MARCHING AT THE HEAD OF AN OBSCENE JIHAD DEDICATED TO KILLING OLD GODS AND DEIFYING NEW ONES.

LOOSE FOLDS PULL OUT EASILY, SAGGING INTO EMPTY SPACES FOR THE DRAMAS TO COME OUT OF ABATUR'S COURTROOM.


AN ANIMATED TAPESTRY SHIFTS HIS TONNAGE INTO MOTION, THE BRUTAL SPIKES OF HIS THONG TWISTING IN AS WELL AS OUT.
IT'S SMALL COMFORT IN THE FACE OF WHAT MUST SOON FOLLOW.

THWOOK
FUNCTIONAL METAL BONDED TO SHARPENED BONE, FASHIONED FROM THE STRIPPED CLEAN SKELETON OF HIS FATHER--
--JUST AS GRIOT'S CARCASS WILL PROVIDE THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE TO HIS OWN SPAWN.
BLOOD AND GRISTLE CURDLE IN IRREGULAR PUDDLES ON THE FLOOR OF THE SACRED CHAMBER--
-- GRIOT'S REVULSION NOT AT THE TOUCH OF THE MEATY MATTER, BUT AT ITS CHAOTIC ROOTS.
TATTOOING NEEDLES HISS IN THE WARM MIX, GREEDILY SUCKING UP THE CENOBITE'S SPECIAL DYE.
LOOKING UP FROM HIS GRIM TASK, THE DISGUST ON GRIOT'S FACE TURNS TO SADNESS--
--TRAGIC DEPRESSION AT WHAT ROILS ABOVE, SENDING DOWN ITS GHOULISH RAIN.

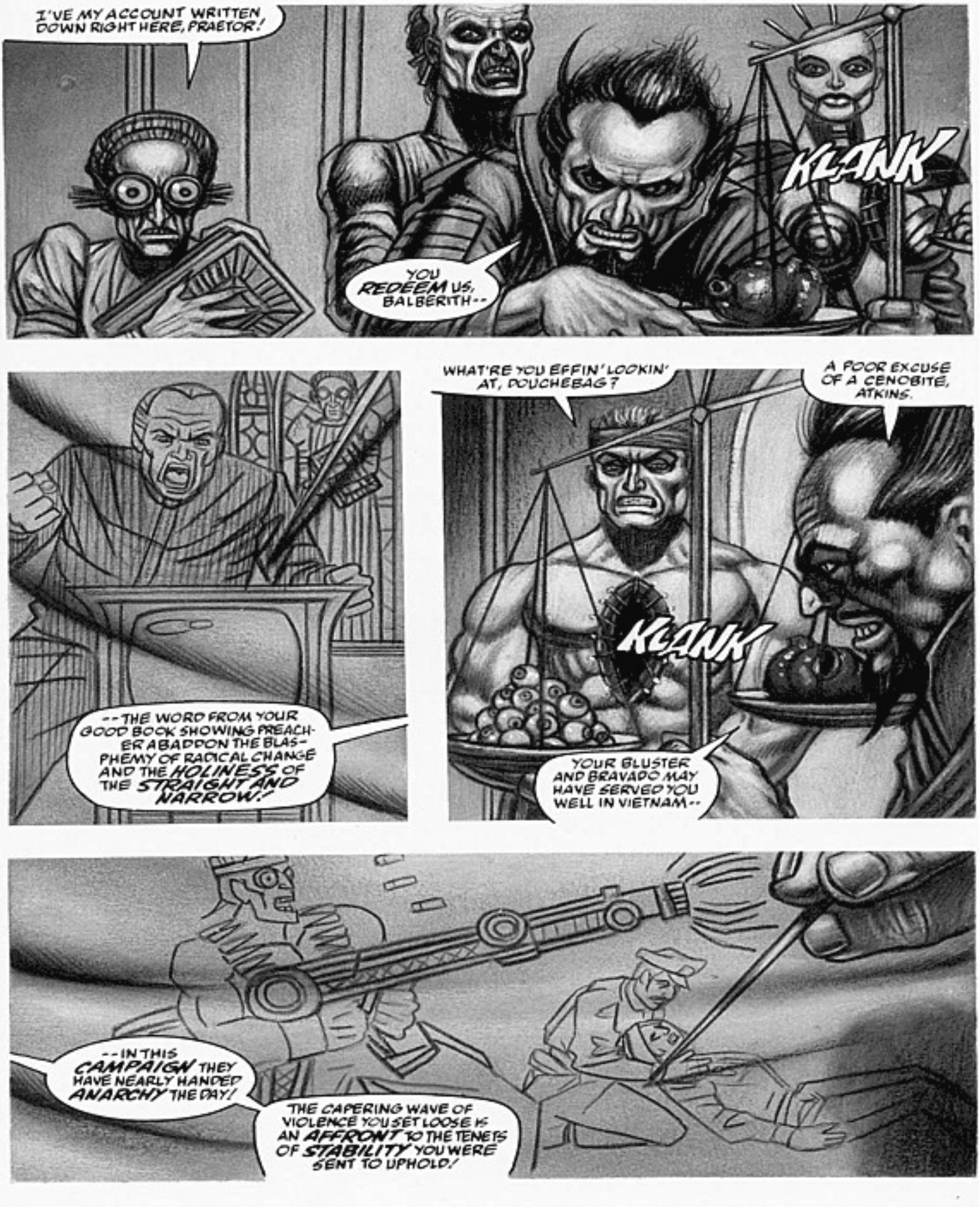
A STORM-SYMBOL OF WHAT PLAGUES THE VERY ESSENCE OF DOWN BELOW.
SYMMETRY HAD BEEN THE GRACEFUL DANCE OF ANCIENT CHIDNA AND BASILISK.
SAVAGERY WAS THE NEW STEP, AN ANOMALOUS DEATH WALTZ MARKING THE CREADED TIME OF CONFIGURATION.


AN INFERNAL EQUINOX OF SUPREME MALEVOLENCE, CHAOS AND ORDER VYING FOR SUPREMACY AT A COSMIC LEVEL.
CHOOSING AGENTS FROM ABOVE AND BELOW TO CHAMPION ONE SIDE AND ANOTHER.
ABOVE, UNSUSPECTING MEN AND WOMEN PLACED AT CRITICAL CROSSROADS.
MICHAEL DECOURCY, LEADING HIS AFRICAN NATION OUT OF APARTHEID OR INTO FASCISM.
FATHER PETER ABADDON, PREACHING SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT OR SOCIAL INQUISITION.
Dr. CASEY GIOELI, METHODICALLY DISCOVERING AN AIDS VACCINE OR ACCIDENTALLY UNLEASHING AN EVEN DEADLIER SICKNESS.
LEO SHABEL, CLEANING UP AN INNER CITY JUNGLE OR GIVING IN TO BLOODLUST.
OFFICERS LESTER GEORGE AND JILLIAN ELLIOT, EXAMPLES FOR BRINGING ETHNIC GROUPS TOGETHER OR PLUNGING A METROPOLIS INTO A FURY OF RACE RIOTS.
FROM BELOW, ALL TOO AWARE CENOBITES ON THE DEFENSE AGAINST CHANGE.
THE VAGA INIQUITATIS, THE GOD LEVIATHAN'S HAND-PICKED VESSELS OF ANGER AND INVENTORS OF THE WICKED ARTS--
--A SO-CALLED DEVIL'S BRIGADE CHARGED WITH GUIDING THE HUMANS DOWN THE PATH OF DISCIPLINE.

A FIGHTING FORCE OF THE DAMNED NOW MADE TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR WAR CRIMES...
... DEGREES OF SINFULNESS TO HELL'S GAIN OR LOSE.
HEAR YE AND KNOW! THIS COURT IS NO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER--
--SAVE THAT ALL HERE ARE GUILTY!

THE EXTENT AND IMPORT OF YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS YOU, YOURSELF SHALL JUDGE, WITH WHAT PASSES FOR YOUR HEARTS.
SO IT WILL STAND REVEALED WHETHER ORDER SUSTAINS OUR PLACE OF TORMENT... OR CHAOS HAS UNDERMINED US THROUGH YOUR FAILURE!
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN HIDE...
KLANK
...AS YOU CAN SEE, LEVIATHAN'S JUSTICE IS FAR FROM BLIND!
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, ABIGOR.
ETERNAL LEGIONS WILL KNOW OF YOUR TRIUMPH WITH THE MAN DECOURCY.

...AND HOW A STRICT REGIME OF OPPRESSION NOW MARCHES WHERE WEAK BENEVOLENCE ONCE THREATENED!
YOUR WORDS THRILL ME, PRAETOR... JOIN WITH ME LATER THAT I MIGHT EXPRESS MY FULL APPRECIATION.
KLANK
MAGISTRATE ABATUR-- ALLOW ME TO--
STAY YOUR TONGUE, FACE, I'LL HEAR NONE OF YOUR REHEARSED LINES--
--NOT WHEN YOUR LAST PERFORMANCE WAS SO OBVIOUSLY A TRAGEDY!
THIS SHABEL'S ACTIVISM WAS BLESSED STRUCTURE-- YOUR PATHETIC DIRECTION OF HIS LIFE DROVE HIM TO AIMLESS MURDER!


I'VE MY ACCOUNT WRITTEN DOWN RIGHT HERE, PRAETOR!
KLANK
YOU REDEEM US, BALBERITH--
--THE WORD FROM YOUR GOOD BOOK SHOWING PREACHER ABADDON THE BLASPHEMY OF RADICAL CHANGE AND THE HOLINESS OF THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW!
WHAT'RE YOU EFFIN' LOOKIN' AT, POUCHEBAG?
A POOR EXCUSE OF A CENOBITE, ATKINS.
KLANK
YOUR BLUSTER AND BRAVADO MAY HAVE SERVED YOU WELL IN VIETNAM--
--IN THIS CAMPAIGN THEY HAVE NEARLY HANDED ANARCHY THE DAY!
THE CAPERING WAVE OF VIOLENCE YOU SET LOOSE IS AN AFFRONT TO THE TENETS OF STABILITY YOU WERE SENT TO UPHOLD!

IF THAT WERE THE WHOLE CASE, MY BRETHREN, WE MIGHT REST EASY, THE STATUS QUO OF HARMONY AND DISORDER MAINTAINED!
BUT THERE WAS A FINAL SOLDIER SENT INTO THE TRENCHES TO HOLD THE LINE--

-- A FAILURE WHO HAS ALLOWED IMBROGLIO TO BREAK THROUGH!
NO! HE PROMISED!
I NEED SACRED UNIFORMITY TO RETURN IF I'M TO SLEEP AGAIN-- TO DREAM! IT'S ALL I HAVE! IF I HAVE TO STAY AWAKE ANOTHER MOMENT I'LL--

WE ALL FEEL YOUR ANGUISH, FLAGELLUM-- JUST AS WE ALL FEEL HIS BETRAYAL!
Dr. GIOELI ORGANIZED NO CURE UNDER HIS OVERSIGHT-- ONLY THE MEANS TO FREE AN UNSETTLING NEW VIRUS, IMPIOUS IN ITS ERRATIC SOWING OF CONFUSION AND SUFFERING!

DISCORD MAY GAIN PROMINENCE BECAUSE OF IT, HELL MAY FALL--
-- BUT NOT BEFORE THE TRUE FACE OF LEVIATHAN'S "FAVORITE SON" IS REVEALED AS THAT OF A TRAITOR!

DO YOUR DUTY, GRIOT!
A THICK HAND MOVES TO OBEY THE COMMAND TO CONDEMN...

...BUT THE PICTURE ETCHED INTO EPIDERMIS IS INSTEAD ONE OF THE SUCCESS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN.
A MARK OF FAITH.
HELL'S FAILURE TO ELICIT A MAJORITY IN THE TIME OF CONFIGURATION ASSURES TRAGIC TIMES AHEAD!
RETURN TO YOUR CIRCLES AND PITS AND PREPARE FOR--
WAIT! LOOK-- THE TATTOO!
GRIOT SUPPORTS THE JUDAS-- HE ATTEMPTS TO TELL POSTERITY A DIFFERENT TALE FROM THE TRUTH!
W-WE MUST HAVE FAITH IN THE FAVORED ONE-- HE WOULD NOT HAVE ABANDONED US AS ABATUR INSISTS!
HELL NEEDS HIM AND WHAT HE REPRESENTS, THE INSPIRATION HE HAS ALWAYS MEANT IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE THESE TROUBLED--
HIS INEFFICACY WAS A SHAME SO GREAT HE COULD NOT EVEN BRING HIMSELF TO APPEAR AT TRIAL!
YOURS IS ONE SO WITLESS THAT YOU WOULD.
THE CHARGE IS PERJURY. THE VERDICT, GUILTY.
KLANK

DESTROY HIM!
REND HIS FORM!
THE SENTENCE, DEATH!

DON'T DO THIS THING--
--FOR LEVIATHAN'S SAKE--
-- FOR YOUR OWN!

YOU GIVE IN TO THE VERY CHAOS WE FIGHT AGAINST--
-- GIVE IN--
--CHAOS--

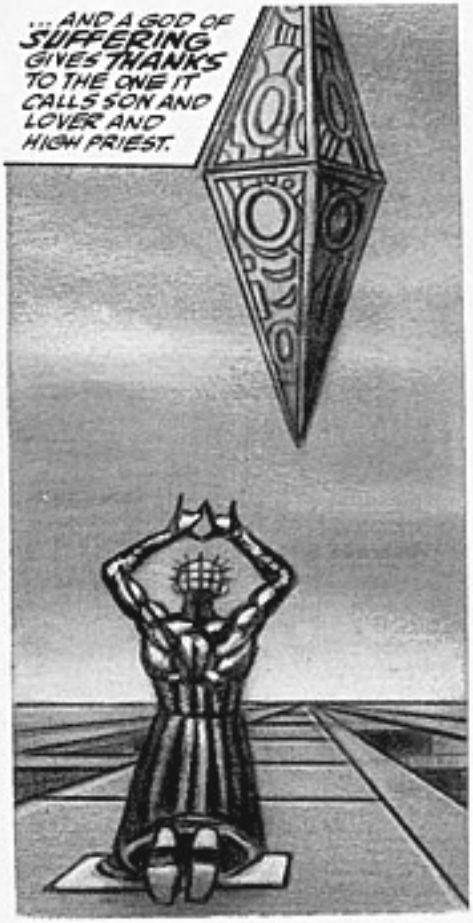
ORDER.
KRDOOM

THERE WILL BE ORDER IN THIS COURT!

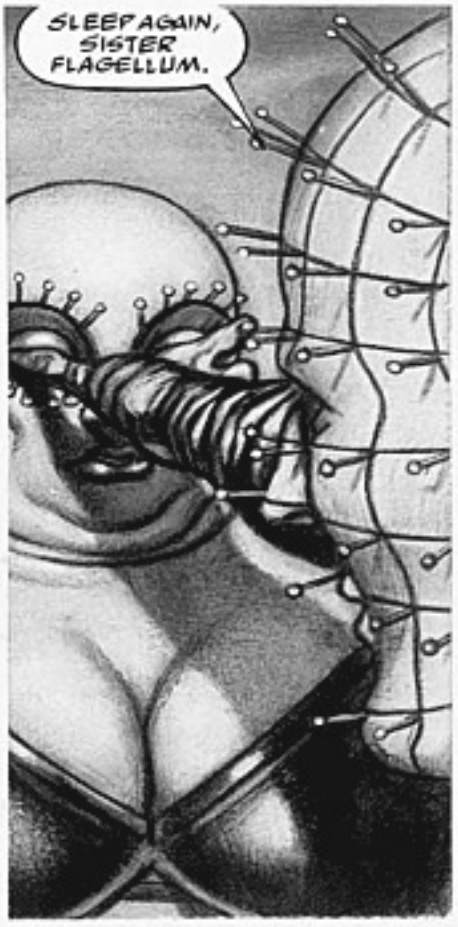
YOU DARE! COME DOWN FROM MY BENCH, TURNCOAT, AND BE JUDGED FOR YOUR SINS!
YOU ARE NOT FIT TO JUDGE MY SINS...
... BUT I WILL GLADLY ADD YOU TO THEM.
KLNK KLANK
YOUR LACK OF FAITH IS A SHAMEFUL THING...
...NOT IN ME, BUT IN THE CONSECRATED ORDER TO WHICH YOU HAVE PLEDGED YOURSELVES.
HERE, HERE WAS FAITH.
YES, I LET THE WOMAN RELEASE A PLAGUE OF DISARRAY-- SUCH WAS MY PURPOSE.
FOR I ALSO LEFT HER WITH A CONFIGURATION OF ENZYMES AND PROTEINS THAT WILL INEVITABLY LEAD HER TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE OF HER VACCINE--
--AN ORDERLY PROCESS THAT WILL, IN THE END, ALLOW HELL TO SNATCH VICTORY FROM THE JAWS OF DEFEAT.

FOR WHAT COULD BE SWEETER THAN TO ALLOW CHAOS TO THINK IT HAS WON THE DAY...
...ONLY TO FIND THAT WE HAVE GAINED ETERNITY...

AN ANCIENT CHAMBER IS CALM ONCE MORE...


...AND A GOD OF SUFFERING GIVES THANKS TO THE ONE IT CALLS SON AND LOVER AND HIGH PRIEST.

MASTER... I OFFER A MOST GLORIOUS BEATING. A REWARD FOR YOUR PIOUS CUNNING.
AND A MEANS OF SOME ATONEMENT FOR MY DISHONORABLE BEHAVIOR.


SLEEP AGAIN, SISTER FLAGELLUM.

WATCH THE ORDER IN YOUR DREAMS.
AS TO A REWARD, THE CENOBITE ALREADY HAS HIS.
THE PROMISE OF WHAT DR. GIOELI WILL ACHIEVE IN THE SERVICE OF MANKIND WILL TIP THE SCALES ONCE MORE IN LEVIATHAN'S FAVOR--
-- AND BRING THE SWEET TASTE OF HER FLESH ONCE MORE TO HIS LIPS AS SHE JOINS HIM IN HELL.
THOUGH HIS PLANS MAY WEAKEN HELL IN THE SHORT RUN, IN THE LONG TERM HELL MUST PREVAIL. GIOELI SHALL BE HIS.
NO DEMON COULD ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE... EXCEPT, PERHAPS, FOR THE REST OF HER RACE TO FOLLOW SOON AFTER.
BENEATH COLD, BEYOND-DEAD FINGERS, PIERCINGS ADJUST TO A PRECISE SYMMETRY HUMANITY CAN'T HOPE TO DENY...

THE END

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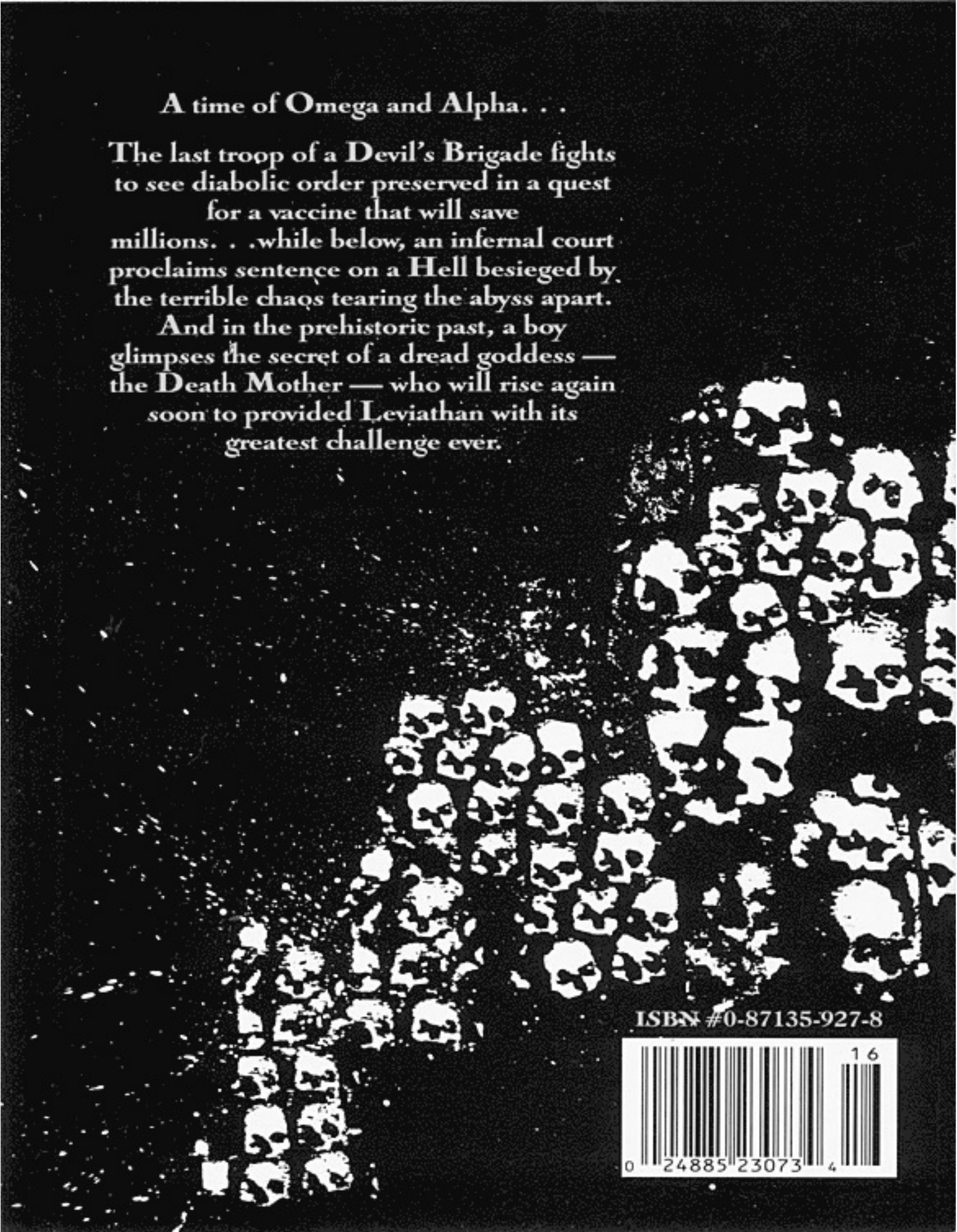
A time of Omega and Alpha. . .

The last troop of a Devil's Brigade fights to see diabolic order preserved in a quest for a vaccine that will save millions. . .while below, an infernal court proclaims sentence on a Hell besieged by the terrible chaos tearing the abyss apart. And in the prehistoric past, a boy glimpses the secret of a dread goddess — the Death Mother — who will rise again soon to provided Leviathan with its greatest challenge ever.



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